

WEEKEND

FRI/SAT/SUN | JULY 23-25, 2004

THE City Paper

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NASHVILLE'S NEWSPAPER

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House curbs same-sex marriage

The House of Representatives Thursday approved a bill to curb same-sex marriage after rejecting concerns the measure may be unconstitutional. Meet us on **page 10** for the full story.

AT&T pulls plug on home service

Long-distance carrier AT&T, once known as Ma Bell, is ending its attempts to compete for residential phone service customers to focus on more lucrative business clients. See **page 13**.



Treasure trove

Bill and April Mullins have filled their Germantown home with handmade treasures, many from the Tennessee Association of Craft Artists. See **Dwellings & Décor** insert.

They're playing that funky music

The Trachtenburg Family Slide Show Players, along with They Might Be Giants, play SoBro Summer Nights tonight. Find out about weekend events, **page 20**.



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CITYSCOPE



Recognize it? Win. Details **PAGE 2**.

FRIDAY NIGHT
68° scattered storms

SATURDAY
85° partly cloudy

More weather, **PAGE 4**

Porter film tells truth

'De-Lovely' film plays close to vest, **page 17**



Allison hits higher note

Predator/musician inks hockey deal, **page 29**



Kaboom: Thermal stack goes

By William Williams
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Viewed as a quirky icon by some and as a harsh eyesore by others, the towering smokestack that dominates the former Nashville Thermal Transfer Corp. site downtown will be toppled Sunday at 7:45 a.m.

The demolition will require no more than 10 pounds of explosives and will result in the 199-foot stack, erected in the mid-1990s, being felled like a chopped tree.

Baltimore-based Controlled Demolition Inc., which imploded downtown's Andrew Jackson Hotel in 1972, will handle the demolition. Pedestrians can view the event from the Shelby Avenue and Gateway bridges.

"This is a fairly small project, but it's important to Nashville," said Mark Loizeaux, CDI president. "It's architecturally interesting."

That architectural component is why some had hoped to see the stack remain. For example, Streuver Brothers, Eccles & Rouse Inc., which wants to develop two mixed-use buildings on the site, has mentioned including the stack with its proposed project. The Streuver project would accompany a baseball park for the Nashville Sounds.

And some local architects find the stack, which is made primarily of poured reinforced concrete and contains two metal flues, as a potential useful artifact overlooking the Cumberland River.

"Cities are interesting when they are overlaid and overlaid so that there are fragments of past years," said Seab Tuck of Tuck Hinton Architects. "In a perfect world, it would be saved."

David Bailey, principal at Hastings Architecture

CONTINUED ON **PAGE 7** ➤



Reuters

Historic publication

The relatives of Sept. 11 victims read a report from the 9/11 Commission at its official release in Washington Thursday. The commission investigating the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks unveiled the report that points to "deep institutional failings" and missed opportunities by both the Bush and Clinton administrations to thwart the hijackings. More on **page 10**.

State Democrats head to Boston

Tennessee stars address convention

By Skip Cauthorn
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The Tennessee Democratic Party Delegation is headed to Boston this weekend to spend a week at the Democratic National Convention and is poised to cast the state's votes for John Kerry for president.

Gov. Phil Bredesen and state Democratic Party Chairman Randy Button are co-chairs of the delegation. Bredesen is ex-

pected Wednesday to stand in representation of Tennessee's 85 delegates and pledge the state's votes for U.S. Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts in his bid against President Bush.

Kerry Thursday will address the convention in what may be the most important speech in his political career to date.

Tennessean and former Vice President Al Gore Jr., the party's 2000 presidential candidate, will address the convention Monday along with former presidents Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter.

Memphis Congressman Harold Ford Jr., who serves as a Kerry campaign national

co-chairman, is also expected to play a "major role" that is yet to be determined, according to the state party. He will speak to the Tennessee delegation Monday morning.

Nashville Congressman Jim Cooper will speak to the delegation on Wednesday.

Roughly 200 Tennesseans are expected to attend out of an estimated 5,500 Democrats at the convention, according to the state Democratic Party.

Republicans, who will hold their national convention in New York Aug. 30-Sept. 2, maintain Kerry and his running mate, U.S.

CONTINUED ON **PAGE 7** ➤

Downtown area gets booming with EPA grant

Rolling Mill Hill will be a truly spectacular development when completed. Metro got some good news earlier this week to help make the project a reality.

The Environmental Protection Agency awarded Nashville a \$900,000 grant to clean up any hazardous materials, known as a brownfield, that may be on the site.

Mayor Bill Purcell said the cleanup will give the project momentum as some of the site's buildings will be demolished later this year.

The 34-acre site, once home to General Hospital, will become an urban neighborhood with a variety of housing options right on the banks of the Cumberland River.

Rolling Mill Hill sits near the Thermal site, which will also be transformed into some kind of mixed-use development encompassing residential and retail.

The developments — and a marina/luxury condominium development a few miles away — will give the Cumberland River new life.

The projects will also support further development in downtown Nashville as the city pushes for affordable housing and more urban residential areas.

George has left the Coliseum

It's a sad day when one of the Tennessee Titans most stellar players and one of Nashville's most generous patrons has to leave the organization because of salary cap considerations.

Eddie George has lit up the town over the last few years, both as the bulldog running back for the Titans and for the hours of charitable work he's done in Nashville.

We understand big-time professional football isn't like college football. Great teams don't change because the players graduate, but because team ownership has to balance the team's talent and bottom line.

And there's not a lot of sentimentality in professional football. Remember when kicker Al Del Greco got bounced from the Titans for one lousy year?

But Eddie George is in that special league of Titans players who embraced our city and got a giant hug back.

Wherever you go, Eddie, know that grateful fans will follow your career. CP

YMCA case clarity

If you read "YMCA exempt from tax" (July 21, p. 7) about the YMCA of Middle Tennessee's recent legal victory, you might not realize just how decisive and clear the court's opinion was.

In response to a now six-year-old challenge to the Y by a group of for-profit health clubs, the Davidson County Chancery Court denied the group's claim in the clearest possible terms. The court upheld the YMCA's exemption on its family wellness centers, ruling that the Y complies fully with a state statute that exempts properties owned by not-for-profit, charitable organizations that provide physical exercise opportunities for children and adults.

The YMCA earns its exemption every day by providing a broad range of life-changing programs and services to more than 164,000 people from all walks of life, regardless of income — programs like youth-and-teen sports, childcare and preschool, Hispanic Achievers, Youth in Government and senior-adult wellness. The court's decision echoes a similar 2003 ruling by the Tennessee Board of Equalization.

Since 1875, the Y has worked hard to build strong kids, strong families and strong communities, and it continues to do so today.

37203
Rich Ford

Editor's note: Rich Ford is board chair of the YMCA of Middle Tennessee.

Gala of hypocrisy

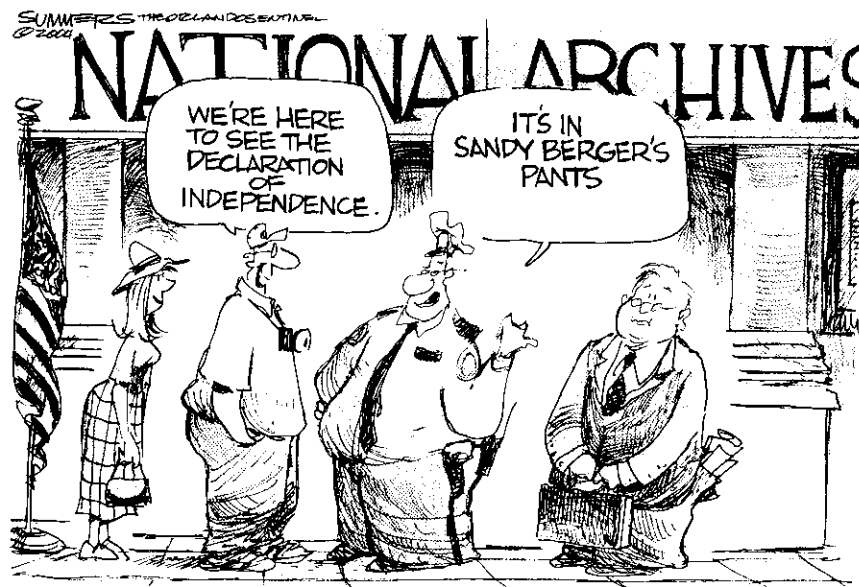
I must respond to your selections printed in "Letters to the editor" (July 22, p. 2).

All three entries related to federal politics were from liberals. Good journalism should be unbiased, having articles from all sides.

In response to "G-chip for government smut" by C.W. Clouse, this person needs to get a grip on reality. If Senate hearings were broadcast to the general public, I'm sure there are millions of children who would be watching it with rapt attention ... not!

I assume Clouse is old enough to remember the disgusting display of depravity and vulgarity in the homosexual's gala parade after the inauguration of President Clinton. This gala was so bad that the media could not, or would not, broadcast much of it, and

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



the liberal news media did not say a single negative word about it. The conservative and religious community was up in arms over it but could not get it stopped, or even toned down.

But, it's OK for the liberals to be vulgar and smutty in public.

I am not condoning vulgar speech, but many children hear as much or more bad language from their parents, the parents of friends or at school.

Yes, we all need to strive, with God's help, to rise up from the heap of collapse of our society today.

37211
R.G. Greenwood

Water pistol toting terminator

If nothing else the "Girlie Man" editorial cartoon (July 22, p. 2) ought to remind us that before we comment on the news, it's important to first read and understand it.

It's true that a few days ago, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger made news by referring to Democrats in the California legislature as "girlie men." I understand that the line, dropped from the governor's speeches quickly thereafter, played quite well at the mall food court where it was delivered.

True to form, a few too-sensitive souls emerged to offer sound-bites about homophobia and misogyny. A few legislators, too,

made their displeasure known.

But is Schwarzenegger's admittedly petty silly insult the real reason California Democrats are in an uproar? No.

Here's where reading beyond the headline would have helped your editorial cartoonist (a wit whose bag of tricks includes drawing Sen. Ted Kennedy with a liquor bottle in his hand).

When Schwarzenegger campaigned against then-Gov. Gray Davis, one of his standard stump promises was that he would cross the aisle to work with Democrats to avoid California's annual budget meltdown. And for a while, the new governor seemed to be keeping his word. Indeed, this year's budget was nearly complete, the differences between the Republicans and Democrats being fairly minor and almost certain to be quickly overcome.

Then, for no apparent reason, the governor introduced two anti-labor measures that are not only utterly unrelated to the budget itself, but that also seem almost specifically chosen to upset the Democrats. And for what?

The last budget signed by Gov. Gray Davis, 2003-2004: \$99.1 billion. Arnold's first effort after promising to "terminate" the budget: \$103 billion.

How's that for the subject of a cartoon? A terminator with a water pistol.

37212
Jason Miller



Photo by Mike Strasinger

Thursday's CityScope

U.S. Border Cantina, 106 30th Ave. N.

No winner

Think you can identify the CityScope photo on the front page? The first person to correctly identify the photo by calling 298-9833, ext. 200, or by sending an e-mail to cityscope@nashvillecitypaper.com will receive a copy of *The English Patient* - Collectors Series DVD from Buena Vista Home Entertainment. You must include your name, daytime phone number and address. Please spell your first and last name. You may pick up your prize within 30 days at *The City Paper*, 1 Burton Hills Blvd., Suite 100. Only contestants who have not won in the past 30 days are eligible to win. Contest ends at 5pm daily.



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'Lost Boys of Sudan' detail brave journey

Refugees find new lives in Nashville

By Bill Harless
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"If I cannot do it, someone will do it. If you and me cannot do it, I say God can do it!" John Awan assured the audience at the Belcourt Theatre Tuesday night during a discussion that followed a screening of the *Lost Boys of Sudan*.

He was talking about his journey to Nashville from the violence-ridden East African country of Sudan,

The Lost Boys of Sudan plays at the Belcourt Theatre, 2102 Belcourt Ave., at 5:15, 7:15 & 9:15 p.m. Monday, Tuesday and Thursday and 5:30 p.m. Wednesday. Call 846-3150 or visit www.belcourt.org for more information.

which he left as a refugee in 2001.

Awan is from southern Sudan, where for much of the past 20 years, rebel groups have fought for autonomy from the northern Islamic government.

Currently peace is being brokered between the south and the north, but conflict has broken out between the



Santino Majok Chour receives many heartfelt goodbyes from his friends at the Kakuma Refugee Camp in Kenya before making his way to America.

northern government, based in Khartoum in eastern Sudan, and Muslim rebel groups in Darfur, western Sudan.

According to a report released Monday by Amnesty International, "Massive human rights violations committed in the [Darfur] region include: extra-judicial executions, unlawful killings of civilians, torture, rapes, abductions, destruction of villages and property, looting of cattle and property, the destruction of the means of livelihood of the population attacked and forced displacement."

The government in Khartoum ei-

ther directly or indirectly supports these actions, according to the report.

No wonder, then, arriving in modern America from this chaotic land, leaving his family behind, Makat Makuach, also on the panel, suffered what he called a state of "confusion."

The film portrayed and Makuach described the feeling that a refugee has of heavy responsibilities pressing upon him from multiple directions.

The refugee must send money home to Sudan to support his loved ones — they are counting on him for this. But the refugee must also pay for his apartment, food and education

on a miniscule income.

"Do what you have to do, send what you have to send, but make sure you don't [leave yourself] nothing," Makuach explained.

Many Sudanese refugees in Nashville have two fulltime jobs, working 16 hours a day, said Ed Smith, a volunteer with Catholic Charities through Hillsboro Presbyterian Church.

Makuach said he also suffered loneliness. When leaving for America, he thought: "I'm going to a different world and I don't know any people here."

Fifty-one Lost Boys from Sudan have settled in Nashville since 2001, the year most of them arrived. In total, from 1999 to 2003, Catholic Charities of Tennessee has resettled 250 Sudanese refugees, according to Holly Johnson, director of refugee and immigration services at the agency.

However, Catholic Charities is resettling fewer Sudanese refugees than it used to because the United States is worried about terrorists.

Osama bin Laden lived in northern Sudan during part of the 1990s.

At the panel discussion, Asrar Babikir, a caseworker for Catholic Charities, described the resettlement process.

An apartment is first found and furnished for the refugees. Then the refugees are picked up at the airport, driven to their home and given an orientation. Most have never used an electric stove.

The refugees apply for food stamps and for TennCare, get a Social Security card, see a doctor if necessary, and begin searching for jobs and attending school.

Many earn GEDs and then attend a local college.

Catholic Charities needs volunteers for its refugee resettlement programs, Johnson said.

The Web site for Catholic Charities of Tennessee is <http://www.cctenn.org/>.

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TODAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
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pm Scattered Storms Low 68°	pm Cooler Low 65°	pm Mostly Clear Low 64°

DETAILED FORECAST:

A cold front will move through from the north today. It will continue to be hot and humid ahead of the front but it will cool things off a bit for the weekend.

Depend on
Lisa Patton



Land use policies Southeast gets growth plan

By Judith R. Tackett
jtackett@nashvillecitypaper.com

More than 700 residents and stakeholders have worked on the update of the Subarea 12 Plan, which the Planning Commission approved Thursday.

The Southeast Community Plan, which replaces a 1996-update of the Subarea 12 Plan, covers the area between Williamson County and Interstate 65 at the southwest border, the Grassmere CSX railroad tracks in the north and I-24 in the east.

Project coordinator Planner Cynthia Wood said land use policies of already developed portions of the community remain basically unchanged.

Most growth in the area will occur south of Bell Road between

Nolensville Pike and I-24. Lennox Village, Davidson County's first new urbanism-style development on more than 200 acres, is one such example of a developing community in that part of Davidson County.

Wood said while community participants have largely accepted the fast growth in their area, they expressed their hope to preserve some of their rural character. Thus, the plan sets aside a rural policy near Cane Ridge Park, which will not be served by sewers.

More than two dozen residents expressed opposition to the plan for various reasons.

"I don't believe there were any items tonight that we had not exten-

sively discussed throughout the process," Planning Executive Director Rick Bernhardt said.

Councilman Sam Coleman of District 32 urged commissioners to pass the plan and asked planners to continue working with neighbors if they want to amend it.

In other matters, a 60-acre zone change at 3512 Knight Drive opposite Brick Church Lane, that would have allowed up to 222 dwelling units from the currently permitted 111 units, was deferred indefinitely.

Planners determined that the proposed zone change was not consistent with the area's policy listed in the Bordeaux-Whites Creek Community Plan. **CP**

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St. Luke's helps Old West

Adult program offers training

By Judith R. Tackett
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St. Luke's Community House together with the Nashville Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) are offering a new, free GED and job training program for adults in Old West Nashville.

The program is made possible through grants from The United Way of Metropolitan Nashville, the Frist Foundation and the Memorial Foundation. The OIC is a community-based job training and placement program,

which started in Nashville in 1968.

St. Luke's Community House, 5601 New York Ave., will offer the space in its newly renovated building, and OIC instructors will offer the classes. St. Luke's is one of the oldest non-profit institutions in Nashville and provides two dozen services to working families in Old West Nashville, which is the area north of Charlotte Pike and south of Centennial Boulevard and is locally also known as the Nations.

About 46 percent of adults living in the Nations do not have a high school degree. United Way has recognized the need in the area by making St. Luke's a Neighborhood Resource Center a few years ago.

St. Luke's and OIC will also provide free childcare to students attending the GED and job training courses. The central location of St. Luke's minimizes transportation problems.

"St. Luke's Community House and OIC are delighted to be able to help neighborhood adults increase their potential for better jobs," St. Luke's Executive Director Doug Anderson said, adding the funding will ensure these services would be offered for at least three years.

Job training courses will help participants to identify their skills, interests and potential employment barriers, and fill out job applications.

For class information call 350-1131. CP

McNair gets ruling on evidence in DUI

By Chris Lewis
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A Nashville judge Thursday tossed out key evidence in the drunk-driving case of Titans quarterback Steve McNair, ruling that



McNair

a police officer did not have sufficient cause to pull over McNair's car last year. Davidson County Criminal Court Judge Cheryl Blackburn ruled that although Officer Shawn Taylor properly administered a breath test that showed McNair's blood alcohol level over the legal limit, McNair's driving that night wasn't erratic enough to warrant the stop.

One of McNair's attorneys, Ed Ryan, said the ruling doesn't dismiss the charges, "but it does suppress all the evidence against him."

Assistant District Attorney Jim Sledge said the officials in Dis-

trict Attorney's office still have to review the ruling before making a decision. But he conceded that the ruling "makes it highly improbable that the case can be prosecuted."

McNair was arrested May 22, 2003, after Taylor followed him for several blocks on Broadway. Taylor pulled McNair over after noting his Lincoln Navigator had veered into the center dividing line. A breath test showed McNair's blood alcohol level at .18, higher than the .10 allowed at the time.

He was indicted on charges of driving under the influence and illegally possessing a firearm.

The judge said although the breath test and car searches were proper, "the court does not find that Officer Taylor's observations of (McNair's) driving over a two-block period provide specific and articulable facts that defendant was driving under the influence."

Sledge said the ruling also makes it clear that Taylor was doing the best job he could and wasn't out to get McNair. CP

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CEO awards showcases savvy youths

Young entrepreneurs will showcase their talents at the 6th Annual CEO Academy Awards and Young Entrepreneurs Business Plan Competition beginning at 6:30 p.m. today at the Sheraton Nashville Downtown Hotel.

The CEO Academy was founded in 1999 to help children develop and market their own businesses while helping them improve their verbal, reading and writing skills.

From 6:30-7 p.m., the young professionals will showcase their businesses to the public at the Young Entrepreneurs Marketplace. From 7-9 p.m., students will compete for prizes and get awards for their successes at the marketplace.

Finalists will attend the national Young Entrepreneurs and Business Plan Competition in Milwaukee next spring. CP

— Staff reports

Dems hit Bean Town

■ FROM PAGE 1

Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina, aren't expected to win Tennessee in the November election.

However, political consultant and first-time delegate Carol Andrews says Tennessee Democrats are bringing enthusiasm to the convention following several victories in the 2002 Tennessee election and that Kerry is very much in the picture here.

"You're going to see the Tennessee Delegation, in particular, is very much energized," said Andrews, who works with Nashville political consulting firm Fletcher, Rowley, Chao. "We're coming out of our success of 2002 and the election of Gov. Bredesen.

"We control the governor's office and the congressional delegation."

Kerry's recent naming of Edwards, who once worked in Nashville, has also created excitement for Tennesseans, she said.

Republicans say Kerry will attempt to walk away from the convention with a more moderate image.

"What's important is the convention in Boston is going to serve as the Democrats' salon," said Lindsay Taylor, a Republican National Committee spokesperson. "They're going to get themselves an extreme makeover. John Kerry is a far left duckling who hopes to emerge from his convention as a centrist swan"

The Kerry/Edwards campaign, while picking up some momentum following the convention, shouldn't expect as much of a boost as is typical, said political analyst Pat Nolan.

"I do not look for it to be as big a boost as usual because more people have been paying attention earlier," said Nolan. "Before there has been more of a soft vote."

These days, said Nolan, conventions are essentially public relations "infomercials" designed to present a week of positive media views of the party and its ticket.

"It's almost infomercials [that] they're doing on a daily basis to present a very positive view of the Democratic Party," says Nolan. "New York next month will be all about Republicans." CP



Photo by William Williams

Some architects had hoped to save the smokestack as a historical feature.

Up in smoke

Thermal Corp. stack blasts into history

■ FROM PAGE 1

Associates, said that though the stack offers no significant architectural details or materials, "it still had the opportunity to be a landmark defining the Demonbreun Street axis."

The stack is believed to be the city's tallest of its type, according to Tim Hestle, who was Nashville Thermal Transfer Corp.'s last general manager.

Hestle said Thermal capped the stack at 199 feet to avoid a safety lights requirement had the structure soared 200 feet or more.

"We didn't want that maintenance headache," said Hestle, who is now plant operations manager with the Metro District Energy System facility that heats and cools various large downtown buildings and that replaced the trash-burning Thermal facility.

Fairfax, Va.-based Gershman,

Brickner & Bratton, Inc. (GBB) has consulted the Thermal Transfer Corp. Board of Directors during the demolition of the entire facility and will aid in Sunday's effort.

Bob Brickner, GBB senior vice president and manager of the demolition project, said a wrecking ball razing was considered.

"But considering the economics for this project, it will be faster and less expensive to [demolish by explosives]," he said.

During the demolition, the Metro Public Works Department will close portions of First Avenue, Demonbreun Street and Malloy Street for a brief period.

The most recent downtown demolitions of note that involved explosives included the Sam Davis Hotel, the Sudekum Building and the Cain-Sloan Co. Building, all felled between 1983 and 1994. CP



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State eyes loophole for Internet phone tax

By Judith R. Tackett
jtackett@nashvillecitypaper.com

Tennessee is watching carefully as Congress decides whether states can impose taxes on telephone calls transmitted through the Internet, because

eliminating such taxes could cost the state millions of revenue dollars.

The U.S. Senate Commerce Committee Thursday recommended passage of the VoIP Regulatory Freedom Act of 2004, but cut out one

section of the bill that would have prevented states from taxing Internet phone calls.

VoIP stands for Voice over Internet Protocol, and experts anticipate that eventually all voice communica-

tion will be transmitted through the Internet.

Earlier this spring, U.S. Sen. Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) fought successfully to pass the Internet Tax Non-discrimination Act in the Senate that extends a temporary moratorium on Internet taxation.

Alexander said he was pleased that the Senate Commerce Committee has stripped the VoIP Regulatory Freedom Act of 2004 of the controversial non-taxation section, which would have reversed the earlier act's Internet phone taxation policy.

Alexander got involved in the issue last year after Gov. Phil Bredesen pointed out that Tennessee could lose millions of revenue dollars if Internet taxation was not permitted, Alexander's press secretary Alexia Poe said.

The Internet Tax Non-discrimination Act allows Tennessee to continue collecting taxes on Internet access until November of 2007.

The Internet Tax Non-discrimination Act would also make it "clear that states and cities can continue to collect taxes on telephone services, even if those telephone calls are made over the Internet," Poe said.

"And that [is] one of the senator's main concerns that as technology develops and gets better ... services are going to move from your regular, normal phone line over the Internet, and these Internet service providers could bundle services and get out of paying what they owe to the state," Poe added.

Emily Richard, spokeswoman for the Tennessee Department of Rev-

enue, said her office has serious concerns about federal bills dealing with Internet taxation and is watching Congress carefully.

Richard said her department is calculating potential revenue loss that would occur if federal government prevents states from taxing VoIP technologies.

Thursday's bill before the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee reflected the federal government's uncertainty over how to treat taxation of VoIP technologies in the future.

Currently the government collects a 3 percent excise tax on telephone services, which, according to IRS data, translated into \$5.73 billion of tax collections in 2001. The tax could add up to \$89 billion more during the next decade.

However, with voice communication moving in the direction of Internet transmission, the ban on taxation could cost state and local governments billions of dollars in future revenue.

The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that states and local governments collect about \$10 billion in revenue each year from the sale of telecommunications services.

Within the next five years up to \$3 billion in revenues could be lost on state and local levels, according to the CBO.

State and local governments could see themselves forced to raise tax levels in other areas to make up for the loss. CP

— Bloomberg News contributed to this report.



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Operation Smile

Students start training

By Andrea Fanta
Staff writer

Two Nashville students will begin training Saturday at Pepperdine University in Malibu, Calif. for volunteer medical work overseas.

Lindsay Pratt, a student at Harpeth High School, and Fannie Stabile, of University School of Nashville, have committed to two January medical missions sponsored by Operation Smile, a Virginia-based charity that provides surgery and other medical attention to people in developing countries.

Pratt will serve in the Philippines, and Stabile in Venezuela. They will assist medical volunteers by teaching families and children about nutrition, dental hygiene and

burn prevention.

"This is my first real opportunity to do something big and important, where I feel like I'm actually going there and making a difference instead of instructing it from school," Stabile said. "Mostly I've done a lot of things like sort toys and help with fundraisers, but this will be the first time I'll actually be in there and helping out."

Pratt and Stabile will train in Malibu for four days, while Kevin Seitz, a student at Montgomery Bell Academy, will travel to Pepperdine Tuesday to attend the Operation Smile Convention. There he will meet the organization's co-founders and learn about how to start and promote an Operation Smile club. CP

LOCAL BRIEFS

MTA launches bus service

Local officials from the Regional Transportation Authority and Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority have launched Relax and Ride, a commuter bus service between Rutherford and Davidson counties. Two buses, which feature long-distance amenities such as high-back seats, individual overhead reading lights and air conditioner controls, will now run between Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, Smyrna, LaVergne and downtown Nashville. For more information, call the RTA, 862-8833, or visit www.rta-ride.org.


College hosts art institute

Volunteer State Community College hosts its Vision, Strength and Artistic Expression art institute this week 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m. daily for 89 children and some adults with profound disabilities. This year's theme is African culture, and participants will learn African dance, percussion, music, drama, stories and arts and crafts at the university campus. The event is held in association with The Challenges Club, the school's student organization for people with disabilities. Students will showcase what they have learned at a reception at noon today.

Mayor to hold First Day fest

The 2004 Mayor's First Day Festival will be held 2-5 p.m. Aug. 15 at the Gaylord Entertainment Center. This year's festival will feature family fun, educational entertainment and free school supplies and snacks. The festival will also cover more space, with the entire Gaylord Entertainment Center concourse opened to create easier access to all booths. There will also be outdoor activities as well as live music in the park adjacent to the center. The first day of school for Metro school students is Aug. 16.

Time capsule stops in Nashville

The Trivial Pursuit 1990s Edition Traveling Time Capsule stops in Nashville Aug. 17. Events will take place from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. at the Country Music Hall of Fame, 222 Fifth Ave. S. and will include games and the chance to see what's inside the 50-foot capsule, including memorabilia from the Mark McGuire-Sammy Sosa home-run record competition, a set of original Spice Girls dolls and a can of Clinton Cola. 



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Canine cops at DNC

Labrador Retriever "Halli" points to the source of an explosive scent for her Massachusetts State Police Bomb Squad handler Bill Qualls during a demonstration at the Massachusetts State Police Headquarters in Framingham Thursday of some of the security measures planned for the Democratic National Convention in Boston July 26-29.



Reuters

Gay marriage

House approves curb

WASHINGTON — The Republican-led U.S. House of Representatives approved a bill to curb same-sex marriage on Thursday after rejecting concerns the measure may be unconstitutional.

On a vote of 233-194, the House sent the proposal to the Senate where members of both parties said it will likely die. But it could help rev up an election-year issue.

Last week, on a related front, the Senate easily blocked a bid pushed by President Bush to amend the Constitution to define marriage as a union strictly between a man and a woman.

The House measure offers a different approach. It would forbid federal judges from requiring one state to recognize a same-sex marriage licensed in another.

Democrats accused Bush and fellow Republicans of pushing the proposals merely to rally their conservative base for the November congressional and presidential contests.

"This debate is about a national election,"

Rep. Jerrold Nadler, a New York Democrat, said in opposing the bill. "We are playing with fire with this bill, and that fire could destroy the nation we love."

House Judiciary Committee Chairman James Sensenbrenner, a Wisconsin Republican, said, "To insinuate this bill is an attack on the foundation of our government is just plain wrong."

Sensenbrenner said the framers of the Constitution gave Congress power to limit judicial authority.

Saying Thomas Jefferson had voiced "fears about judicial powers being unchecked," Sensenbrenner said, "This bill is a check on judicial power."

The House bill would prohibit federal courts from considering challenges to the 1996 U.S. Defense of Marriage Act, which empowered each state to decide whether to allow same-sex marriage. **CP**

— Reuters

Dems block nominees

WASHINGTON — U.S. Senate Democrats blocked three more of President Bush's judicial nominees on Thursday, raising to 10 the number they have stopped in a battle sure to extend until at least November elections.

In what have become campaign slogans, Republicans again branded Democrats "obstructionists," and Democrats accused Bush of trying to tilt the courts with "right-wing extremists."

"It is the American people, I believe, who in a little more than 100 days, will next vote on this issue," said Sen. John Cornyn, a Texas Republican.

As Congress prepared for a six-week recess during which members will gear up for the November presidential and congressional contests, Senate Republicans forced showdown votes on three of Bush's stalled judicial nominees.

Each time, Republicans fell about a half dozen short of the needed 60 votes in the 100-member Senate to clear procedural hurdles against Michigan Appeals Court judges Henry Saad and Richard Griffin, and David McKeague, a U.S. District judge in Michigan. **CP**

— Reuters

Sept. 11 panel assails failures

WASHINGTON — The Sept. 11 commission on Thursday criticized both the Bush and Clinton administrations for failing to fully grasp or effectively combat the threat posed by al Qaeda and recommended a radical shake-up of U.S. intelligence to meet future dangers.

The final report issued unanimously by the 10-member commission pointed to "deep institutional failings" and missed opportunities to thwart the hijackings carried out by al Qaeda operatives, which killed almost 3,000 people in 2001.

"This was a failure of policy, man-

agement, capability and, above all, a failure of imagination," said commission chairman Tom Kean, a former Republican governor of New Jersey.

He said the goal was to prevent further attacks, which were expected.

"Every expert with whom we spoke told us an attack of even greater magnitude is now possible and even probable. We do not have the luxury of time. We must prepare and we must act," he said.

The 567-page report said terrorism was not the overriding national security concern for the U.S. government under the Clinton or Bush ad-

ministration before the attack.

It recommended the appointment of a national intelligence director and creation of a national counter-terrorism center.

"The National Intelligence Director should oversee national intelligence centers to provide all-source analysis and plan intelligence operations for the whole government on major problems," the report said.

Other recommendations included declassifying intelligence spending, upgrading computer technology and updating congressional oversight. **CP**

— Reuters

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Decapitated body found in northern Iraq

BAGHDAD, Iraq — A decapitated corpse was found by police in northern Iraq Thursday and Bulgaria said it was investigating whether the body was one of its citizens seized by militants loyal to al Qaeda ally Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.

The Foreign Ministry in Sofia said another headless body found in the same area earlier this month had been identified as that of 30-year-old Bulgarian truck driver

Georgi Lazov.

Lazov and fellow Bulgarian Ivailo Kepov were seized as they delivered cars to Mosul. Their captors sent a video to Al Jazeera earlier this month showing the execution of one of them.

Bulgarian troops are part of the U.S.-led force in Iraq. On Wednesday an Internet statement said to be from the European wing of al Qaeda said Bulgaria and Poland would face

attacks unless they withdrew their troops from Iraq.

In Kuwait, the transport company that employs three Indians, three Kenyans and an Egyptian also kidnapped by guerrillas in Iraq said it would do all it can to win

their release.

Zarqawi's group has already executed an American and a South Korean hostage, and has claimed responsibility for a series of suicide bomb attacks in Iraq.

The guerrillas have also demanded

that India, Kenya and Egypt withdraw their citizens from Iraq. None of the countries is part of the U.S.-led military coalition in Iraq but many of their nationals work as drivers and contractors. CP

— Reuters

Vigilantes on trial

Former soldier faces charges

KABUL, Afghanistan — The U.S. military in Afghanistan admitted Thursday they had held but later released an alleged Taliban official handed over to them by an American vigilante group operating in the country.

The vigilantes, led by a former American soldier identified as Jonathan Idema, are now under arrest and charged by Afghan authorities with illegally detaining Afghan citizens and torturing them at their private jail in Kabul.

Idema claims to have been working for the U.S. government, but the U.S. military and NATO peacekeepers have previously said he had no connection with them.

A U.S. military statement said U.S. forces had received a detainee from Idema's group at Bagram Air Base north of Kabul in May. It said he was freed this month after it was established he was not a wanted former Taliban official.

"Records indicate that coalition forces received one detainee from Idema on May 3, 2004 at Bagram," it said.

Afghan security forces seized Idema, two other Americans and four Afghans July 5 after freeing eight prisoners from a private house they had rented in Kabul.

The seven defendants went on trial in Kabul Wednesday, charged with hostage-taking, torture, illegally arresting and interrogating Afghans.

The three Americans face up to 15 years in prison if found guilty. CP

— Reuters

Train derails in Turkey

ISTANBUL, Turkey — A packed express train traveling from Istanbul to the Turkish capital Ankara derailed Thursday, killing 139 people, in one of Turkey's worst rail disasters, officials said.

"A total of 139 people were killed, and another 57 people were injured," a Health Ministry official told Reuters.

Officials suspect the accident was caused by a mechanical fault. Transport officials said one of the rear coaches may have derailed first, pulling others off the line, CNN Turk television said.

"Four wagons were derailed and fell on their sides," Mehmet Ayci of the state railways agency told Reuters. "We don't believe speed was the cause, because the train was traveling slower, between 45-50 mph, in this area."

The head of a crisis center,

Muammer Turker, told reporters the train was carrying 234 passengers and nine crew.

The train came off the rails almost two hours after leaving Istanbul, Turkey's commercial hub and biggest city.

Many of the victims were children, CNN Turk said.


The new fast train connecting Ankara with Istanbul went into service in June amid much fanfare. Critics have said Turkey's decrepit train system was in need of complete modernization and was not capable of running high speed services.

"Using the old track and simply making changes to accelerate the train was a grave mistake. Railway experts who said it was not possible to use this track were ignored," former transport minister Oktay Vural told CNN Turk. CP

— Reuters


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